



**American  
Red Cross**  
West Virginia Region

## AFTER ACTION REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Agency: **American Red Cross**

Event: Emergency Response to storm related state of emergency

Prepared by:

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### Key Participants:

NAME	JOB TITLE	ROLE IN EMERGENCY
Cheryl Ingraham	Regional Emergency Services Director for the West Virginia Region	Director of Disaster Relief Operation
Vic Bowman	Emergency Services Director for the New River Valley	State Emergency Operations Center Representative
546 Total Staff (524 Volunteer)	Staff in a all activities and functions of the Disaster Relief Operation for the American Red Cross	
ARC Internal AAR	The American Red Cross held a daylong meeting on August 16 of over 40 staff and volunteers from across the State. This review was led by an external facilitator and supplemented by continuing input from subject matter experts from National Headquarters of the American Red Cross. The process for that internal review is ongoing and has not been completed at this time; however, input from that meeting has been included in this report.	

### SUMMARY OF ROLE OF AMERICAN RED CROSS:

The American Red Cross prevents and alleviates human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors. During a disaster, our first priority is to ensure that people have food, a safe place to stay, and emergency supplies. We work with government and community partners to open shelters where residents will find comfort with a hot meal, recovery information, and a

place to rest. We support emergency workers and individuals and families returning to their homes by distributing food, water, and essential clean-up items from emergency response vehicles.

In West Virginia the American Red Cross is a co-lead for the Mass Care Annex of State Emergency Operations Plan (along with the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources). In this role, the Red Cross engages in a variety of activities to support the State in planning, coordinating and executing of mass care programs and strategies. The Red Cross also takes a leadership role in working with other non-governmental organizations and private companies that provide services during a disaster.

In response to the Derecho Event of June 2012, the American Red Cross:

- Operated 20 shelters
- Supported 62 Fixed Feeding Sites through delivery of meals
- 4 Kitchens (ARC, Southern Baptist, Other)
- 4 Staff Shelters
- 1048 Shelter Overnight Stays
- 77,450 Meals Served
- 80,694 Snacks Served
- 21 Vehicles Provided Mobile Feeding
- 16,553 Bulk Items Distributed ( including comfort and cleanup kits)
- 9 Training Sessions Provided to 49 People
- 1079 Health Service Contacts
- 820 Mental Health Contacts

This event presented a number of challenges which were unique to West Virginia and which presented unavoidable obstacles to the response of all agencies, including the American Red Cross. Any discussion of roles and responsibilities of agencies without consideration of those challenges would be incomplete.

- NO NOTICE EVENT: Because there was no advance warning or notice of this event, there was no opportunity to preposition human or material resources to respond rapidly.
- WIDE SPREAD NATURE: Unlike most (if not all) prior emergency events in West Virginia, this event significantly affected almost all of the State. Fifty three of the State's fifty five counties were impacted by the power outage; by some estimates 1.5 million of the State's 1.8 million residents were without power. This factor precluded the movement of human and material resources within the State from

unaffected areas to the affected areas. Additionally, neighboring states were also dealing with the impact of the storm.

- **COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE:** The impact of this event seriously degraded the communications infrastructure of the entire state, resulting in difficulty communicating with external partners as well as the internal volunteer and paid personnel of the American Red Cross.
- **POWER OUTAGE** alone does not generally result in immediate emergency needs requiring the resources of a major response
- **DURATION OF EVENT:** The length of time that the power outage lasted strained local resources, especially local volunteers and agencies

The circumstances of this event impacted the ability to mobilize volunteers which make up approximately 95% of the staff for any major response by the American Red Cross. The timing of the event was on a Friday evening of the week of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Many volunteers were engaged in week-end activities or on vacation. Any call-down of volunteers before the event was not warranted because there was no notice that a major response was likely. The widespread loss of power made it difficult to communicate with volunteers and staff spread throughout the State. Movement of resources was complicated because all were affected and there was an inability to get fuel for transportation.

### **What went well and why**

<b>SUCCESSSES</b>	<b>HOW TO ENSURE SUCCESS IN THE FUTURE</b>
77,450 Meals Served, 4 Kitchens, 62 Fixed Feeding Sites, 20 Overnight Shelters managed and supported over a wide geographic area encompassing the entire state	Coordinate with partners in planning, preparedness, and exercises to maximize the most effective and efficient utilization of resources and thereby extend the ability to meet the needs of those affected by future disasters.
The American Red Cross quickly scaled up to a state-wide response structure in response to a state-wide disaster event	Continue to develop and exercise Red Cross staff and volunteer leadership as a state-wide team in conjunction with government and non-government partners

Integration of local, state, and national human and material resources into a state-wide disaster response	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to recruit, train, and exercise volunteers and partners</li> <li>2. Continue to refine, along with partners, an effective system to manage spontaneous volunteers to match needs with skills and availability</li> <li>3. The continued planning and exercise internally will facilitate the scaling up in the future. Inclusion of all partners within the process will lead to a facilitation of the process as well as bring about a more effective integration.</li> </ol>
Activation of national level partnerships brought needed feeding capacity and material resources to the State. For example: Southern Baptist kitchens were brought to the State from Kentucky and North Carolina pursuant to national MOU between the American Red Cross and the Southern Baptist Mission Board; Walmart provided water and other commodities pursuant to the relationship between the American Red Cross and Walmart; Lowe's and First Energy collaborated with the American Red Cross to donate and distribute water and ice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and encourage local partnerships</li> <li>• Identify national level partnerships with non-government organizations and private entities to supplement needed material and human resources.</li> </ul>

### What can be improved and how?

What can be improved	Recommendations
Difficulty maintaining a consistent Point of Contact with local emergency management in 50+ counties	Identify and train 20 additional volunteer government liaisons over the next 12 months to support paid staff during emergencies
Improve inter-agency operating procedures and working definitions to effectively collect and record service delivery locations which can be published	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Working with WV Division of Homeland Security and WV DHHR (the co-lead for Mass Care), convene a mass care "task force".</li> </ol>

to the public in a timely, accurate, and consistent manner	2. Revisit and revise Memorandum of Understanding with the State of West Virginia
Improve understanding of roles and responsibilities of the Red Cross at the local and State levels. Improve understanding of the process by which the Red Cross scales up a response from a local response to a state-wide response	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Individual meetings by Regional and local Red Cross Emergency Services personnel with local emergency management to explain and discuss roles, responsibilities, and process for disaster response.</li> <li>2. Encourage joint participation in exercises at all levels.</li> </ol>
Identification of additional volunteers at the local level to better support the initial response and immediate emergency needs of the public until additional support from outside the locality can be mobilized	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to recruit and train additional Red Cross volunteers throughout the State.</li> <li>2. Convene meetings of non-government agencies to develop partnerships to best utilize existing human and material resources.</li> <li>3. Work with WV VOAD and other partners to strengthen the process by which spontaneous volunteers are identified and utilized to meet the needs of the affected populations.</li> </ol>
Ways to communicate across State when the infrastructure has been compromised.	Work with partners to identify and develop processes for alternative communications methods, e.g. amateur radio